

## Opening Remarks – Stephen Schmidt, ITS Chair – 31<sup>st</sup> European Regional Conference of the International Telecommunications Society (ITS), Gothenburg, Sweden

June 20, 2022

### Introduction

Good morning. (*God morgon*)

Welcome to Gothenburg, Sweden. (*Göteborg, Sverige*)

Welcome to the 31<sup>st</sup> European Regional Conference of the International Telecommunications Society (ITS).

And a very BIG thank you to everyone that made the effort to be here, in person, after so long.

As we are coming together from 25+ countries, it is timely and proper to have a sense of place and to speak about Sweden and its people, its ICT achievements, and this leading university, Chalmers University of Technology.

### Sweden

Sweden is a remarkable nation and one of the most successful societies on earth, having distinguished itself in numerous ways:

- High standard of living,
- Being amongst the global leaders in:
  - life expectancy,
  - GDP per capita,
  - gender equality, and
  - access to public services

Also notable are:

- high-quality, public education, which is free from primary school to graduate school
- Global environmental leadership, with 99% of the country's waste recycled
- And world-leading charitable giving, the *only country* where donations account for more than 1% of GDP

Sweden ICT achievements are equally numerous, varied and impressive:

From an ICT perspective, Sweden is enormously successful and innovative even though it is a small country with a comparatively small population:

- Today, Sweden is a global 5G leader in terms of the *speed and reliability of its networks*, driven, in part, by the global leadership of Ericsson, driven in part by the acumen of

Swedish carriers, as well as by carefully crafted telecommunications policy over many years, notwithstanding the recent delays in spectrum assignment.

5G is just one part of the story.

And it is part of a *larger and longer* story of *sustained* engineering, industrial and innovation excellence in Sweden, of which telecom is an important part.

It is illuminating, then, to look at Swedish telecommunications leadership, over time:

- **In 1876, Lars-Magnus Ericsson and his wife, Hilda, founded the Ericsson company.** And, today, 150 years later, it still stands as an independent and global company – unique amongst its peers in having sustained 150 years of technological transformation.
- **The first telephone line was installed in Stockholm, in 1877, only one year after its invention,** after it was demonstrated to King Oscar at the Royal Castle.
  - By 1885, Stockholm had more telephones than any other city in the world.
  - The two examples show that Sweden achieved a position of early leadership in network technology, knowledge, and innovation. It is not hard to trace a clear line from these early achievements to Sweden's present excellence in 5G.
- **Sweden was an early mover (1993) in terms of liberalizing its telecommunications markets,** five years ahead of the European common policy, in this regard, and ahead of much of the rest of the world.
  - Sweden was thus an early leader in the *purposive* use of competition and (de)regulation as a means to foster investment and innovation.

Today, as a result of global technology and policy leadership, the Swedish people benefit from world-leading telecom networks and are one of the most digitized nations on earth.

### Chalmers University

It is significant that we are gathered together today – not in corporate headquarters, nor in a factory, nor in a government office (all places driving Swedish ICT success) – but, rather, we are gathered together in a university.

This makes sense.

In fact, it is impossible to imagine Sweden's global ICT leadership without strong universities and without a strong national commitment to high-quality, free education.

Universities, like Chalmers, complete the virtuous circle of commercial investment, innovation and forward-looking government policy, that are driving Swedish success.

Chalmers has – quietly but decisively – become a hub for telecommunications policy research, collaboration, and training, giving Chalmers University of Technology a major influence on global telecommunications.

Although ITS is a global organization: *if it had a home, the strongest claim to a home would surely be here at Chalmers, and in Sweden, the living heart of ITS.*

This is evident on many levels:

- **Research:**

- This conference is the 2nd major ITS conference hosted by Chalmers, with the 5th annual ITS European Regional Conference held on June 20-22, 1993.
- This in addition to the 40 ITS conferences, workshops and events that Dr. Bohlin helped support and organize, globally, during his 12 year tenure as Chair of the ITS, including opening new frontiers for ITS in China, Brazil, the Caribbean and MENA.
- In a very real sense, Chalmers has expanded the global reach of ITS

- **Collaboration:**

- Erik is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Telecommunications Policy*, the leading academic journal in our field, and the official ITS journal.
- In that role, since 2009, he has interacted with hundreds of authors and reviewers every year – connecting Chalmers to the pulse of global communications scholarship.

- **Teaching:**

- During his nearly 30-year career, Erik has touched the lives of 1000s of students who can now be found working – in universities, in government, and in industry – across Sweden, Europe and the world.
- Erik's deep commitment to his students mirrors the deep commitment of Chalmers University, which, for 193 years, has focused on training the next generation of scholars, civil servants, and industry leaders.

**Thank you Erik.**

**And this focus on communications policy is completed and supported by other areas of ICT excellence at Chalmers including:**

- antenna systems, fibre optics, and software design.

**Chalmers leads in areas such as:**

- quantum computing and the graphene flagship, the EU's biggest research initiative, and is thus at the sharpest of sharp edges when it comes to technology and, critically, technology policy

**Thank You's**

As my last, but most important task, I would like to thank some of the many people who worked on this conference

- I wish to express my deep and sincere thanks to my ITS Europe colleagues, **Professor Jason Whalley** of Northumbria University and **Dr. Volker Stocker** of TU Berlin.
  - You are the engine room of this conference and very, importantly, you “kept the lights” on, at ITS, by organizing two major online conference during the pandemic period.
- I also sincerely thank **Professor Mats Lundqvist**, Vice President Utilization at Chalmers, for his vision and generous support of this conference.
- **I wish to thank all of the authors, presenters and participants.**
  - The conference organizers provide a framework --- a time, place and theme – but all of you *bring it to life* with your papers, presentations, ideas and friendship.
  - In a very real sense, there would be no ITS without you.
- **My last word is about students.** Students are very important to ITS.
  - Students are presenting some of our most fresh and exciting research at ITS conferences.
  - We are glad you are here and happy to see many of you returning again this year.
  - We want ITS to be welcoming place for students presenting their research and we want to make an important contribution to your careers.

**I hope that everyone here has a tremendous experience over the coming days.**

**I look forward to our adventure together.**

**Enjoy!**